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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001569

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SUBJECT: PROTOCOLS IN PARLIAMENT-WHAT NEXT?

REF: A. ANKARA 1328
[1](#)B. ANKARA 1537

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Jeremiah Howard for reasons 1
.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Now that the Turkey-Armenia protocols are in parliament, "the hard part begins." The GOT faces an uphill battle in pushing for ratification, as the opposition continues its criticism and public opinion demands progress on Nagorno-Karabakh. What constitutes the minimum political threshold for "progress" is still not agreed on even by high-level AK Party members. END SUMMARY.

Submission to Parliament -----

[1](#)2. (U) On October 21, the GOT submitted the Turkey-Armenia protocols to parliament as FM Davutoglu briefed legislators in a publicly televised speech. He lobbied hard for the protocols, citing benefits for regional peace and prosperity. He attempted to convince MPs the protocols would not leave Turkey vulnerable to territorial claims by Armenia. He contended the status quo in the Caucasus is not beneficial for Turkey or the region, and that normalization between Ankara and Yerevan would accelerate reconciliation between Azerbaijan and Armenia. He outlined three "targets for change": 1) Establishing good neighborly relations between Turkey and Armenia; 2) Establishing a channel of communication between the Turkish and Armenian peoples, and; 3) Acceleration of the process for resolving Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Opposition Pounces -----

[1](#)3. (SBU) Opposition party MPs frequently interrupted the FM's speech, shouting out their criticism: Turkey is bowing to U.S. pressure; Armenia craves Turkish territory and will exploit the protocols to get it, and; the government's effort to improve relations with Armenia will cost Turkey its friendship with Azerbaijan. MP Oktay Vural, speaking for the ultra-nationalist MHP, claimed the GoT signed the protocols, which are "against the national interest of our country," under pressure from the U.S. He vowed MHP would oppose the protocols "as strongly as it can" and that borders should not be open until occupation of Azerbaijani land ends. MHP leader Devlet Bahceli aimed criticism directly at the ruling party: "The AK Party mentality which risks losing Azerbaijan in the name of winning over Armenia has forced relations with this close ally on to a dangerous path." CHP MP Sukru Elekdag berated the government for pushing the protocols while there is still no progress on Nagorno-Karabakh. The predominantly Kurdish DTP, in contrast to the main opposition parties, welcomed the protocols. DTP MP Selahattin Demirtas said DTPers support the resolution of Turkey's domestic and foreign issues through dialogue, and, perhaps self-servingly, called for a more open debate on Turkey's history. He boldly

added, "I'm saying it openly: The massacres of the Armenians are not mentioned in our textbooks."

Next Steps

14. (SBU) The protocols are now with the Foreign Affairs Committee. After that committee's review, the Parliament Chairmanship Council, composed of representatives from all parliamentary parties, will decide when to submit the protocols to the floor.

How Much Progress in Nagorno-Karabakh?

15. (C) The President, PM and FM have all emphasized publicly that the protocols' ratification depends on progress in Nagorno-Karabakh. After the signing ceremony, PM Erdogan said the Turkish people will support the protocols strongly if there is progress between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and that parliament will monitor developments between Armenia and Azerbaijan before approving the protocols. The media reported positively on the signing ceremony and the prospects for peace, but all articles highlighted the importance of Nagorno-Karabakh. In conversations with us, few Turkish officials have argued a complete resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh is prerequisite to ratification. Nevertheless, as the ruling party's poll numbers continue to decline, AKP MPs want substantial progress to defend themselves against opposition and Azerbaijani criticism. Opinions from AK Party members on how much progress they will need vary:

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-- Ibrahim Kalin, Foreign Policy Advisor to PM Erdogan: The future of the protocols depends on Minsk Group progress. A road map declaration and schedule for future meetings could quiet opposition critics.

-- Ayse Hilal Koytak, AK Party Advisor to Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Mercan: The Protocols will pass and borders will open, but the people need something on Nagorno-Karabakh. There is not a specific definition of how much must be accomplished, but when the people can see things are moving forward, they will give their support.

-- Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Murat Mercan: Parliamentary review will take 'a long time.' The government is unlikely to impose party discipline on MPs. No MPs, including Mercan, will vote for the protocols now without substantial progress. An agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan would have to be reached, signed and ratified before the protocols would gain sufficient parliamentary support.

-- Ahmet Iyimaya, AKP MP: There will "never" be a vote in parliament unless there is a withdrawal from the 5 territories. This is required and nothing less will satisfy MPs and the public.

-- Suat Kiniklioglu, Foreign Policy Advisor to PM Erdogan: Azerbaijan tried to change Turkey's mind about normalization with Armenia, but the GOT is committed to its 'neighborhood reintegration' plan. The PM needs progress on Nagorno-Karabakh or the protocols will damage him politically if they are brought to the floor. It would also be pointless because they would not pass. Armenian withdrawal from the 5 territories and a roadmap with international guarantees would provide sufficient political cover for ratification.

16. (C) COMMENT: Davutoglu said, subsequent to his parliamentary appearance, the government will not impose party discipline when the protocols come to a vote, something which we had previously thought a possibility (reftel A.) With each governing party MP free to vote his conscience,

progress in Nagorno-Karabakh becomes key to the protocols' passage. What constitutes sufficient progress is unclear, however, and may depend on AKP's ability to raise its poll numbers generally by generating popular enthusiasm for its many domestic and foreign policy initiatives.

JEFFREY

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